

**THEME: Being Jesus Christ to the World**  
***“Loving God with all Your Heart and Soul through Worship”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

October 5-6, 2012 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

**Psalm 84**

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place,  
    Lord Almighty!*
- 2 My soul yearns, even faints,  
    for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
    for the living God.*
- 3 Even the sparrow has found a home,  
    and the swallow a nest for herself,  
    where she may have her young—  
a place near your altar,  
    Lord Almighty, my King and my God.*
- 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house;  
    they are ever praising you.*
- 5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
    whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.*
- 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka,  
    they make it a place of springs;  
    the autumn rains also cover it with pools.*
- 7 They go from strength to strength,  
    till each appears before God in Zion.*
- 8 Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty;  
    listen to me, God of Jacob.*
- 9 Look on our shield, O God;  
    look with favor on your anointed one.*
- 10 Better is one day in your courts  
    than a thousand elsewhere;  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
    than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*
- 11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
    the Lord bestows favor and honor;*

*no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.  
12 Lord Almighty,  
blessed is the one who trusts in you.*

**Acts 2:42-47.**

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*

**VIDEO      Love the Lord Your God with all Your Heart Soul Mind and Strength**

**SLIDE      Loving God with your Heart and Soul**

Please take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and Meditation Moments. Your Message Notes contain today's scripture passages on them, although you have a different version of Psalm 84 than we read today that gives you some other images around the idea of worship. There also is a place for you to write down anything you would like to remember from today's sermon. On the back side you will find Meditation Moments that will help you think and pray more deeply about loving God with your Heart and Soul through worship. I think you will find that to be a blessing so please take those home and use them for a few minutes each day.

Today we embark on a new series, jumping off from where we ended our last sermon series on the denominations of the Christian faith. We ended that series last week by looking at Methodism and today we are going to begin focusing on this church's purpose statement and fleshing out what that means for us. Our purpose statement is above the doors as you leave the building and on your bulletin each week. Let's see if you can remember it on your own. What is it? **(Computer operators please wait to up the slide until people guess 😊)**

**SLIDE        Be Jesus Christ to the World!**

Very good, I knew you all could do it! You're so smart! It is after all on the top of your Message Notes and on the bulletin cover!

I love our purpose statement because it is easy to remember but it does beg an important question. What exactly does it look like to be Jesus Christ to the world? Does it mean that we all need to be born of a virgin or be able to do miracles or get crucified? Jesus did tell his disciples this in John 14:12.

**SLIDE        *12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.***

Wow, that seems like a tall order. How exactly do we put ourselves in a position to do these great things? We learned last week that Jesus boiled down all of the law for the prophets to two commandments in Matthew's gospel.

**SLIDE        *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself.***

That's what it means to be Jesus Christ to the world and we are going to spend the next few weeks pulling this apart and we are going to do this by giving you four areas of our lives that we believe this should impact in terms of how we experience God. We even put together a great graphic for you that we will be putting on everything around here, including coffee cups! You saw the graphic on the opening slide but here it is again.

**GRAPHIC    Sensing God with your Heart and Soul**

**Seeing God with Your Mind**

**Serving God with Your Heart**

**Sharing God with Your Neighbor**

Today we are going to focus on that first one, "Sensing God with your Heart and Soul." I believe this can happen lots of ways but in our life together as the church it happens often through worship so that is what we are going to talk about today.

A number of years ago our church read together Rick Warren's book, "The Purpose Driven Life" which is an international bestseller. Rick reminded us what we read Revelation 4:12 Would you read that first verse with me?

**SLIDE        *"You (God) created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."***

Did you know that you were created for God's enjoyment? You were made by God to be loved by God and this is very good news. God is radical in his desire to love you and God made you just to enjoy you. The reason that you're alive is God wanted you alive and God gets enjoyment out of watching you.

I was serving Communion one Sunday at my last church just after they had completed a remodel of the Sanctuary. The remodel included replacing an old brass prayer rail with a beautiful new wood one that could be removed when it was not Communion Sunday. Unfortunately, it had not been put in properly, and as we got near the end of serving Communion that day, I heard a crash and then a thud behind me. I was holding the cup of juice, and as I turned, all I saw was the backside of 85 year old Francis Edwards, on all fours on top of the prayer rail that had dislodged as she tried to push herself up from the rail.

The usher came down quickly to me and asked, "What should we do?" My only response was, "Well, you can start by helping her up!" Before he could do that however, the laughter started. Not from the congregation, but from Francis! She began to giggle as she simply sat on the floor. You could hear her laugh over the nice quiet organ piece that was being played by our organist. After the service, I made it a point to seek out Francis and apologize. She just laughed some more and said, "I'm sure God got a kick out of it, seeing me on my knees and all!" Our only hope is that God has a sense of humor...and it's good to know that the first purpose of life that we'll be talking about today is about just that, bringing pleasure to God.

One of the main ways that you bring pleasure to God is simply by sensing his presence in your heart and soul and then loving God back. In that greatest commandment, God says if you don't get anything else, here's what you're supposed to do in life: you're supposed to learn to love God back, because God made you to love you and then to reciprocate that Love.

Now, there's a word for this. It's a word we misuse so a lot of people don't use it. It is the word "worship."

**SLIDE        **Worship is SENSING God with your heart and soul and loving God back.****

The problem is that worship is misunderstood today. When I say the word “worship,” what do you think of? You may think of prayer. You may think of singing. You may think of ritual or communion or going to church, something you do in church. But worship is much more than all those things. According to the greatest commandment this is your primary objective. It’s your highest priority.

What does a person look like when they worship? Have you ever thought about that? If you read the newspaper, they always have the exact same picture of somebody worshipping. It is this – [gesture holding hands up and mouth wide open.] That may be one legitimate form in millions of different ways, but worship is far more than – [demonstrate again]. There’s a lot of ways to worship God and sense God with our heart and soul. Romans 12, verse 1 tells us one way this looks. Let’s read it aloud together. Would you read it with me?

**SLIDE**      ***1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.***

There are two things that worship seems to be according to this verse.

**SLIDE**      **Worship is my response to God’s love.**

Worship is just the way I react, I respond, to God when He loves me. Worship is about sensing God’s love in your heart and soul and then responding to that love. Notice that God takes the initiative to love us first. God always makes the first move. God doesn’t ever ask you to make the first move. God always makes the first move. God creates us. God saves us. God forgives us. God blesses us. God guides us. Then, because of all these things, we worship and we turn our hearts and souls to God. And notice what we do - we “give” of ourselves. That word describes worship. The second thing that worship is, is giving back to God.

**SLIDE**      **Worship is giving back to God.**

God gives to us, and we give back to God and whenever you give back to God, whenever you offer anything to God, that’s called worship. God loves it when we do that and it brings enjoyment to God. When your kids are grateful to you, as a parent that brings pleasure to you. When we’re grateful to our Heavenly Parent this brings pleasure to God. The question then is, “What am I supposed to give?” What do you give a God who has everything? You think finding Christmas gifts is hard for some people? What do you give a God who’s got everything? God

made the world. God made you. God made the universe. What do you give God? I'll tell you what you give God...you give God your love.

**SLIDE**        ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."***

We'll talk the next few weeks about loving God with our mind and strength so let's think together today about how we love God with our heart and soul. To do that I thought it would be great for you to hear from someone besides me on what worship means to them. I want to invite (Courtney DeNier on Saturday at 5:30, Miles Lillard at 8 and 9:30, Gary Goold at 11) to join me on the Chancel area. (Kelsey, only put up the first question. I'll just ask the others as part of the interview but I don't want to be pinned down to them.)

**SLIDE**        **Why is worship important to you?**

Why do you think worship is important to the church?

Why do you help lead worship?

When have you experienced God's presence in worship?

What was that experience like for you?

Loving God with our heart and soul I think is about PASSION.

**SLIDE**        **God wants me to love passionately.**

God wants us to love passionately because God passionately loves you. God doesn't have your affection, unless you give it freely. Loving God with your heart and your soul is about giving God your affection and passion.

This is loving God with your heart and soul. For some of us this is kind of difficult because we grew up in families that weren't real affectionate, that weren't real expressive and that didn't say "I love you" a lot. Maybe you're kind of the silent type. It's not real easy for you to express affection to God without feeling weird or kind of kooky about it. You're going to have to learn how to grow, how to develop, how to say "I love you God".

Do you remember the first time you ever said I love you to somebody? It probably scared you to you death. You had sweaty palms and your stomach was in a knot. You were all nervous and thinking, "Are they going to accept it or are they going to reject it? Are they going to say it back to me?"

Do you remember in junior high when they played this game called, “Who’s going to say it first?” Before you get together with a boy or girl you sent emissaries out and say, “Do you know so-and-so likes so-and-so?” This was our way of “hedging our bets,” so we wouldn’t be embarrassed. You check it out before you step out and take a risk. You’re not going to just walk out there and lay it on the line and say, “You are cool,” you know? No, you’re going to wait and find out if they think you’re cool first. It’s a bit risky in middle school and it can feel a bit risky to say, “I love you.”

The great thing about God is that there is no risk. God said it first. God said it first to you. God said, “I love you.” Even when you didn’t know it, God was showing love to you. God has said over and over and over to you, “I love you,” so you don’t have to worry about who is going to say it first. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called this “prevenient grace.”

#### **SLIDE        Prevenient Grace**

Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before. This is a unique part of the Christian faith that we celebrate when we worship. In many religions, God is seen as an angry tyrant. You have to appease God and you have to avoid God. You feel a need to run from God because you are afraid of a god like that. But that’s not the One, true God revealed in ALL of Scripture. The Bible says God wants to be loved and that he first loved us.

Have you ever said, “I love you” to God? God wants that from you. One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in the Old Testament prophetic book of Hosea. Hosea is called by God to go and marry a woman from a city named Gomer who happens to be a prostitute. Hosea balks a bit, as most of us probably would, but eventually he takes Gomer as his wife. They settle down and have several kids and it seems like it might end happily ever after.

But Gomer is still drawn to her former life and she goes back to being a prostitute in the city. God then comes to Hosea and says, “I want you to go and take her back. Bring her back from that life because she is your wife.”

Hosea says to God respectfully, “Are you crazy! I did it once already and I’m not doing it again! I ain’t going back to get her!”

God says, “That’s kind of how I feel about my people sometimes, but I STILL love them, just as I am asking you to love Gomer.” God says this in Hosea 6:6-7.

**SLIDE**      *I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices.*  
*I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.*

God wants us to know him and love him and we do this with our heart and soul. If you get that done, you have accomplished the most important thing in life. The most important thing you can know in life is that God loves you. And the most important thing you can do in life is to love God back. So when you get up every morning before you get out of bed, sit on the edge of your bed and say something like this, a little prayer. ***“God, if I don’t get anything else done today, at the end of this day, I want to know You a little bit better and I want to love You a little bit more.”*** If you do that, at the end of your day, no matter how bad the day has gone, and no matter how many plans fell apart – if at the end of the day, you know God a little bit better and you love God a little bit more, that day was a success.

On the other hand, if you knock 24 things off your to-do list and you accomplish great things and you achieve amazing goals in your life; if at the end of the day you don’t know God a little bit better and you don’t love God a little bit more, that day, my friend, was a wasted day. It’s a failure because you weren’t put here on earth to check things off your to-do list. The first reason God put you on earth is to get to know God and to love God back. That is the first goal of your life. And you do it by expressing your affection to God. In fact, the Bible says God has extremely deep feelings for you.

You know, I’ve been married for more than 21 years. How about if I walked up to my wife Tami one day and I say, “Honey, here are some flowers for you. I am giving you these flowers for three strategic reasons: Point No. 1, I am your husband. Point No. 2, it is our anniversary. Point No. 3, husbands are supposed to give their wives flowers on their anniversary. So here.”

Wouldn’t she be thrilled? I don’t think so. Why? She wants me to love her passionately. She doesn’t want duty. She wants desire. God doesn’t want your duty. God wants your desire. God doesn’t want – “Oh, okay. I better go worship. Oh, I love you, God” [said in a monotone voice].

God doesn’t want duty. God doesn’t want ritual and religion and rules and regulation. God wants a relationship and God’s passionate about it!

Liz Curtis Higgs was one of the best-known disc jockeys in America, and she lived quite a wild lifestyle without God. In fact, Howard Stern was the a.m. show,



and Liz Curtis Higgs was the p.m. show. One day Howard Stern said to Liz, “You know, you need to clean up your act.” That really says something if Howard Stern is saying it and telling you to clean up your act!

She wrote in her own book that she had been burned by so many men and her heart had been broken so many times, she became a militant feminist. And I underscore, militant feminist. But Liz had a Christian girlfriend who kept inviting her to church. So one day after a long, long time, she said, “Okay, I will go to church one time and ONE TIME ONLY. Then stop bugging me!”

So she went to church one time with her friend. Wouldn’t you know it, that week the pastor just happened to be teaching on the Bible verse that says “Wives submit yourselves to your husbands.” That’s not exactly a good verse to start with a militant feminist, is it? She got a little uptight, a little ticked, a little angry.

But she continued to listen and she actually heard the second part of the verse, which nobody ever talks about. You see, the second part of the verse says “and husbands - you sacrifice yourself; you give yourself for your wives just as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for the church and died for her.”

People don’t ever hear that second part? Who is asked to give their life up, the husband or the wife? It’s the husband who is supposed to sacrifice. Well, when Liz heard that part, she leaned over to her friend and said with a little cynicism, **“well, shoot, I’d gladly give myself to any man if I knew he would die for me.”**

Her friend leaned over and said, **“Liz, there is man who loved you enough to die for you. His name is Jesus Christ. That’s how much He loves you.”**

Not long after that Liz dropped her guard, surrendered her life to God in love, and became a believer. Today she is a well-known Christian author and speaker.

Worship is always a response to God’s love. We love God because God first loved us. When you understand how much God loves you, loved you enough to even come to earth and die on a cross for you, then you say “Okay, God, I surrender myself to You and my soul is in Your hands.”

The truth is everybody worships something. You were wired to worship by God. God put it in your DNA. You couldn’t stop worshipping if you had to, because it is part of being a human. Everybody worships something. That’s why you can go to any culture in the world and find people worshipping. If you don’t worship

God, believe me, you're going to find a substitute real quick, even if it is just yourself.

The past few years one of the big TV hit shows on television has been "American Idol." Since that show came out, there have been many similar kinds of shows. Folks, there are thousands of American idols that we worship all the time. Let me ask you, what are you worshipping? What are you worshipping? I'll tell you what it is. **It is whatever you're giving your primary affection to.** If you show me your checkbooks and your calendar I will tell you what you worship.

Some of us worship our careers and we're living for our job. Even pastors do this! Some of you are worshipping making money. Some are worshipping retirement. Some of you are worshipping pleasure. Some of you are worshipping sex. Some of you are worshipping another person who so dominates your life -- your total affection goes to that person.

The greatest mistake we can make in life is to miss what we should truly be loving with our hearts and souls. So let me ask you a question, "What do you think about most?" Because whatever you think about most is what you love the most. What do you think about when you just let your mind drift? You let it wander and what does it naturally gravitate towards? Whatever that is, is what you worship.

Did you know that your checkbook and your schedule and your smartphone are theological documents? Without even knowing you, if you were to show me your banks statements and you were to show me your schedule, I could tell you right now what you love, because the way you spend your time and the way you spend your money shows what you love the most.

I want to the end this sermon today where I began. This tissue box holder was a gift to me from Francis Edwards. You remember Francis, she was the one I talked about at the beginning of the sermon. I had the privilege of being with Francis through her final days as she battled cancer. She made me these items and they're very special to me because Francis was one of those people whose life truly was worship. She brought pleasure to God in her daily living, as testified by these simple items I use every day.

I will never forget her Memorial service, showing pictures of her life on the video screen that she helped to purchase with her gifts. We saw her as a devoted mother, grandmother, wife, great grandmother, great great grandmother, and even a Motorcycle Mama--riding a Harley. I have no doubt that on that day we

gathered to worship God and give thanks to her life, God had great pleasure. That's why we call our funeral's here Worship services—because you were planned for God's pleasure—you were made to know and love God.

So I challenge you to make as the No 1 goal of your life before everything else—getting to know and love God, because that brings God's pleasure and it can change your heart and your soul. There's not a better goal in life to have and may it be yours this day and every day as you sense God with your heart and soul.

Today we celebrate Communion and in this meal we get to tangibly experience God's grace. This meal is meant to touch your heart and soul as you sense God's love for you.

**SLIDE        Communion**

## ***Sermon Series: Being Jesus Christ to the World***

### ***Sermon Title: "Sensing God with Your Heart and Soul"***

#### **PSALM 84**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven's Armies.

I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young at a place near your altar, O Lord of Heaven's Armies, my King and my God!

What joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises.

What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

When they walk through the Valley of Weeping,\*it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings.

They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem.\*

O Lord God of Heaven's Armies, hear my prayer. Listen, O God of Jacob.

O God, look with favor upon the king, our shield! Show favor to the one you have anointed.

A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.

For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

O Lord of Heaven's Armies, what joy for those who trust in you.

**Acts 2:42-47.**

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

**Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:**

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**Meditation Moments**

**Monday, October 8** – Read Psalm 149 – This last weekend we talked about how you were planned for God's pleasure. One of the traps we often fall into is that we think worship is for us or only about what we like, when the reality is that worship is for God. How can you prepare yourself for worship by focusing on God? We also tend to think that worship is only what we do on Saturday or Sunday at church when really we are to worship God continually, each and every moment of every day. What common task could you start doing as if you were doing it directly for God so that it would be a way of worshipping, or bringing pleasure to God?

**Tuesday, October 9** – Read Psalm 147:1-11 – One of your main purposes in life is to love God. So, how do you love God each day? Is there something you can do to express your love for God today? God also is pleased when we trust and obey him. In what areas of your life do you need to trust God completely? God also smiles when we praise and thank him for everything. End your time today in prayer, giving God thanks for as many things in your life as you can think of, then re-read the scripture for today.

**Wednesday, October 10** – Read Romans 6:12-14 – The heart of worship is giving all of our selves to God. Giving our whole life to God is not easy and often we hedge our bets and hold just a bit back...just in case WE need to take over. But when we do that, it is almost as if we are admitting that God cannot be trusted. Now is the time to surrender to God's grace, love and wisdom. In what area of your life are you holding back from God? Ask God in prayer to help you let go and give your life to him...to do what he wants you to do.

**Thursday, October 11** – Read Romans 5:6-11 – Did you know that God wants to be your friend? It's true...really! God does not want to be over you, but alongside of you, walking with you through life. One of the great paradoxes of our faith is that God wants us to give our lives to him AND THEN walk with us through the good and the bad. God can become our friend through constant conversation and continual meditation. A good friend of mine once told me his favorite way to pray was "street prayer"; prayer with God as he is simply walking down the street. What can you do to remind yourself to think about God and talk to him more often throughout the day? Ask God in prayer to help you practice "street prayer" in the days ahead.

**Friday, October 12** – Read James 4: 7-10 – Developing a friendship with God is like developing any friendship in many ways. You must be willing to be honest with God and you must be willing to put God before your own desires (which often pulls you away from God.) You really are the one who chooses how close you want God to be in your life. So what is your choice today? Do you want God to be a close friend...now be honest!? Maybe the hardest thing to do is to choose God over all the other things pulling at us in our lives. End today's time meditating on James 4:8, "Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you."

**Saturday, October 13** – Read Isaiah 8:12-17 – "God is real no matter how you feel." That is easier to say than to believe some days. It's easy to worship God when things are going great in your life, but life is not always pleasant and when things get tough sometimes the first thing we do is push God away because we feel disappointed in life...and in him! The deepest level of worship is praising God in the midst of pain. Friendships are tested most in times of separation and silence and sometimes it feels like God is silent and far away. When you feel this way I want to encourage you to tell God exactly how you feel. God can take whatever you throw at him and being angry with God still means you have some investment in the relationship. How can you stay focused on God's presence, especially when God feels distant? You might try meeting with others and having them pray for you. You can focus on what God has done for you in the past. You can focus on the truth that God has promised to love you and be with you forever. Spend some time meditating on these powerful words from Hebrews 13:5 as you conclude your devotion time this week, "For God has said, 'I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.'"